



The Only Valentine

Donal Harding



I watched Daddy and Shabonna attend the work of love and often tried to fathom why Daddy bothered. His reactions puzzled me, but I was on his side. At times, I wanted him to put his foot down and demand answers about Shabonnas mysterious disappearances other times, I did not want him to know anything about those missing hours. I vacillated between fear our family would splinter into thirds and commitment Daddy would never be hurt by Shabonnas secret. The Only Valentine tells the story of Shabonna McGee and her daughter, Alice-Swan, whose lives are shadowed by rivalry, betrayal and an old secret that evolves over two decades. Alice-Swan, desperate to protect her father, serves as the unwilling ruse for Shabonnas meetings with her lover. As years pass, Alice-Swan gets closer and closer to her mothers secret, and tension between them builds like a thunderstorm ready to break. After a tragic accident, Alice-Swan learns the whole truth and comes to a face-off with herself. The unconventional and complex kinship of mother and daughter is told with cinematic pacing and through unforgettable characters that leap from the page and linger long after the novel ends. No notes are withheld when it comes to the strings of the heart. Donal Hardings first novel, The Leaving Summer, was named Pick of the List by American Booksellers. His short fiction appeared in the anthology, Christmas Blues, and he is the recipient of the Parris Afton Bonds Award for screenwriting. He holds a Master of Arts from DePaul University and currently lives in Asheville, North Carolina.

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